John Muir

TANNERY AND SHOE SHOPS

Early pioneers in Heber were without the luxury of a shoemaker, and harness makers were without the facilities of a tannery to produce leather. However, in the spring of 1863 an experienced shoemaker named Gustaf Johnson from Sweden was persuaded to move to Heber and open a shoe trade. He set up shop on the home he built at the corner of First East and Second North. It was not until 1878, however, that a tannery was established. The cooperative project was established by businessmen of the community with John Muir as superintendent and John Holfeltz of Midway as the tanner.

The bark from oak, hemlock and pine trees was used in curing the leather, and was found in abundance in the canyons. However, preparing the leather properly was a long, tedious process and the demand for footwear was so great that usually half-tanned leather was taken from the vats and used. This resulted in loose, flabby shoes in wet weather and hard, stiff leather in dry weather. The tannery building was located near what is now 565 East 2nd North.

Mr. Johnson, the first shoemaker, obtained much leather from the old tannery and made excellent shoes and boots by hand. He continued his trade until he died in 1910. A grandson, Ralph Johnson, learned the trade in the shop and made shoes for friends or relatives, but never worked on a commercial basis. P177

Alfred Dahlman, another pioneer shoemaker, came from Sweden

John Roberts and his son Orson, who provided 67 years of shoe making and mending service to Wasatch County. He opened this store in 1892.

in 1878 where he had learned the trade. He and John Danielson, a harness maker, set up a shop on Hatch Row where he worked for some 22 years. Mr. Dahlman sewed and made the shoes entirely by hand. He turned the ladies shoes inside out to sew them. He, like the other shoemakers, obtained leather from the tannery and later from Z.C.M.I. in Salt Lake City.

John Roberts also served the community as a pioneer shoemaker, doing his work at first by hand, making men's boots as well as men's and ladies shoes and was very competent at his work. He had learned the trade in England coming here in 1892 and worked at his little shop in Heber on First West and Second North for 27 years. After his death his son, Orson, having been trained by his father, continued in the business totaling 67 years shoe mending service by the Roberts family. Orson sold the shop in 1960 to Allen Sabey.

Other shoemakers through the years in Heber have been Carl J. E. Hertell, Royal Ellis and Roe Carlile.

Tanner of Leather

from Dorothy Christensen

Home of John Muir

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